

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A seatbelt airbag is formed of a flexible fabric seat belt tube the first end of which is attached to the floor of the vehicle and the second end of which is wound over a conventional seatbelt retractor. In the uninflated condition, the fabric tube forms a flat belt that passes in a conventional manner through a slotted eyelet in a tongue member that is engaged in a conventional floor-mounted seatbelt buckle to form a conventional 3-point restraint having a lap portion and a torso portion. An inflatable airbag member is disposed within the flexible fabric tube extending from the fixed end of the fabric tube to a location past the tongue fitting into the torso portion of the seatbelt. The airbag member is encased for part of its length within a reinforcing sleeve that extends part way into the torso section. In operation, as the airbag is pressurized, in the area surrounded by the reinforcing sleeve, the inflatable airbag member expands only to the size of the reinforcing sleeve to form a gas channel, but does not rupture the reinforcing sleeve or the surrounding seatbelt tube. The portion of the inflatable airbag that extends beyond the open end of the reinforcing tube, however, ruptures the seatbelt tube and expands to its full diameter.

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